Facts about Wheat Flours

Wheat flour is the most important ingredient in home baking and is the frame work for almost every commercially baked product and pasta. Of the grains available for the production of flour, wheat is unique. It is the only cereal grain with sufficient gluten content to make a loaf of bread without being mixed with another grain. Wheat is also the most widely distributed cereal grain. It is grown all over the world. In most instances, a reference to 'flour" is a reference to wheat flour. Wheat is the only cereal grain that contains gluten in sufficient amount to make yeast breads. Some wheat contains more gluten than others.

Flour milled from each class of wheat is used for specific products. The end products are determined by the characteristics of the wheat. Milling wheat into flour reduces the protein content by about 1 percent but does not affect other nutrients in significant levels. 7-bis applies to stone grinding, commercial milling by steel rollers, or home grinding. Whole wheat flour provides basically the same nutrients as the whole wheat kernel itself. To measure unsifted or sifted white flour, spoon flour by tablespoons into a measuring cup until the flour overflows. Do not pack the flour by shaking the cup or hitting it with a spoon. To level the flour, use the straight edge of a spatula or knife. Whole grain or instant flours, though not sifted, are stirred lightly with a fork or spoon and measured the same way.

ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR

All-purpose flour is the finely ground endosperm of the wheat kernel separated from the bran and germ during the milling process. All-purpose flour is made from hard wheats or a combination of soft and hard wheats from which the home baker can make a complete range of acceptable baked products -yeast breads, cakes, cookies and pastries.

Enriched all-purpose flour has iron and B-vitamins (thiamine, niacin and riboflavin) added in amounts equal to or exceeding that in whole wheat flour. The majority of all-purpose flour in the United States is enriched.

Bleached all-purpose flour is exposed to chlorine gas or benzoyl peroxide to whiten and brighten flour color. Chlorine also affects baking quality by "maturing" or oxidizing the flour, which is beneficial for cake and cookie baking. The bleaching agents react and do not leave harmful residues or destroy nutrients.